

*University  
Short Title*

# THE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

## ECONOMIC EDUCATION

G. Derwood Baker

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**MARCH 1950**

# THE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

PUBLISHED BY

THE PAYNE EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY FOUNDATION, INCORPORATED  
157 WEST 13TH ST., NEW YORK 11, N.Y.

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THE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY is published by The Payne Educational Sociology Foundation, Inc., monthly from September to May, inclusive. Publication and business office, 157 West 13th St., New York 11, N. Y. The subscription price is \$3.00 per year; foreign rates, Canadian and South American, \$3.25, all others, \$3.40; the price of single copies is 35 cents each. Orders for less than half a year will be charged at the single-copy rate.

Entered as second-class matter September 27, 1934, at the Post Office at New York, N.Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Additional entry at the Post Office at Manchester, N. H. authorized January 16, 1950.

THE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY is indexed in *Educational Index*, *Public Affairs Information Service*, and *Business Education Index*.

The publishers of THE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY are not responsible for the views held by its contributors.

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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# THE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

*A Magazine of Theory and Practice*

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Vol. 23

March 1950

No. 7

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## EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

### An Editorial

This number of THE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY is devoted to Economic Education. The editorial board was fortunate in securing Prof. Derwood Baker and the Joint Council on Economic Education as its sponsor. It is hoped that it will stimulate interest in the social changes in this phase of our common life.

The evolving pattern of economic life is perhaps beyond the powers of man to prevision. If there is one thing of which we are certain it is that the hand of change "having writ, moves on". The shape of new patterns of economic life must be hammered out on the anvil of public discussion, if they are to be forged democratically.

This writer has complete confidence that the best interests of the most will be served if the control of the direction of change remains in the hands of the people. This responsibility, however, makes it necessary for all to be as intelligent as possible about what the alternatives are as we have to make decisions about economic problems. If this number of the JOURNAL focusses attention on the study of this problem it will have served its purpose.

DAN W. DODSON

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## **ECONOMIC EDUCATION IS A MUST**

**Ernest O. Melby**

The period in which we are living is dominated by a bitter and intense conflict between two opposite conceptions of life and social organization; a statist totalitarianism versus a democratic society with civil liberties and more or less free economic competition. The conflict between these two conceptions of life is world-wide, and its ultimate outcome is the greatest unanswered question of our age. Here in America we think the conflict so important that we have made it the central issue of our foreign policy and are spending approximately half of our federal revenues on the various facets of a cold war against totalitarianism. In this cold war our opponents are banking strongly on the ultimate collapse of our economic system. Whatever arguments we may muster in defense of a free society will, according to our opponents, be largely negated if a free economy proves unworkable or incapable of supplying the common needs of men, ending in depression, unemployment, and widespread human suffering.

While recent years and months appear to have somewhat upset the timetable predicted by our opponents for the collapse of our economic system, few seasoned observers would go so far as to say that the economic problems of our free society have been solved and that we need have no fear of depression, unemployment, or other economic breakdowns. On the contrary, the most realistic observers of the American social fabric recognize that the Achilles' heel of American freedom is somewhere in our economic system. Our best leadership recognizes also that in the last analysis democracy will win or lose on the basis of its capacity for meeting human needs and for releasing the creative talents of men everywhere. In simple language,

democracy will live if it works and it will die if it does not work. Moreover, regardless of what democracy may do in the cultural and human relations areas, if it fails on the economic front it will most certainly go down to defeat. If, then, we are interested in the survival of our way of life, there is no kind of education more important than that which seeks to make the average American intelligent about our economic system and effective as a citizen in relationship to it.

World War II lifted the United States of America into a position of overwhelming economic responsibility and influence on a world-wide basis. It is almost impossible for the average American, living and working within the boundaries of the United States, to realize the full nature and scope of his own nation's power and responsibility. It is becoming increasingly true that solutions for the world's economic problems must, in large measure, be found within the United States of America. There is scarcely a hamlet anywhere in the world whose economic life is not affected by decisions made in Washington. In recognizing this overwhelming responsibility, there should be on our part no semblance of arrogance, but, on the contrary, a deep feeling of humility and a sense of great responsibility. World leadership for America is as of the present moment, a staggering burden. The sheer economic weight of our responsibility strains our economic arrangements seriously. An equally great strain is placed upon our imagination and maturity in international understanding and statesmanship. Since the American economy must not only support its own people, but must in fact undergird the economic structure of the entire world, its successful operation takes on crucial world-wide importance. Certainly if the American economy can measure up to our domestic demands and support world-wide prosperity as well, this very fact will constitute additional proof of its power and potentiality.

One of the striking developments of the last fifty years

has been the increasing importance of the thinking of the average citizen in relation to our economy. In America, with the passing of the years, we have tended to take our economic opinions from the current ones within our own group. One of the striking results of this tendency is the rapid growth of lobbies and vested interests at the local, state, and national levels. Thus laboring men not only have economic opinions, but they make these opinions felt through powerful organizations. Similarly the farm bloc strikes fear into the hearts of congressmen, and the attitudes of businessmen as voiced through such organizations as the National Association of Manufacturers must be reckoned with on any question of national economic policy. If the average citizen of the United States makes up his mind on the various economic issues largely in terms of his own self-interest and neglects the facts of our economy with regard to our resources, our productive capacity, our problems of distribution and taxation, unsound economic policies are almost certain to result. Unsound economic policies are the policies we cannot afford when our way of life is literally fighting for its survival. It would seem obvious that under these circumstances thorough-going economic education must be provided at every educational level, in elementary and secondary schools as well as in colleges and in our various programs of adult education. Unfortunately, economic education in America is meager, sporadic, and often sterile in character. One can graduate from a high school without even an elementary understanding of the economic problems confronting America. One can graduate from college without taking a single course in economics. Even if courses in economics are taken, they are often courses intended for those who are to specialize in economics and in and of themselves give the students little background for understanding current economic issues. It has been frequently observed that we are a nation of economic illiterates, that many of us believe we can get

something for nothing, and that there is a widespread lack of knowledge of the basic facts concerning our economy, its problems, strengths and weaknesses.

With the present conflicts between various groups in our society, the conduct of economic education of a vital sort is by no means simple. There are those who want the schools to beat the drum for capitalism, for free enterprise, and the power of the profit motive. Such individuals want the schools to become propaganda agencies for the status quo. Unfortunately, they do not realize that when a system is fighting for survival, it is of utmost importance that its faults and weaknesses be recognized early and corrected if possible. Critics of our economic system must be heard. Their criticisms may be wrong, but they must not go unheeded for too much is at stake. As a people we must think through the problems of making our economic system work smoothly and effectively. There are a great many of these problems—far too many to mention in this brief article, but four of them will be presented briefly.

### Economic Freedom and Civil Liberties

How far are civil liberties dependent upon private enterprise and a free economy? In all sincerity, we do not know the answer to this question. England seems to be experimenting with nationalization of some of the means of production, and simultaneously retaining her civil liberties. On the other hand, the development of large economic units, especially monopolies, may have a great restricting influence on the creative and adventurous thinking of those who work in such enterprises. It is possible that monopoly is as great a threat to intellectual freedom as is national ownership of a particular means of production. Here we must be concerned not only with legal freedom but with the attitudes of people. When a single economic organization such as a corporation has too much power in a state

or a locality, many people will hesitate to express themselves on current political or economic issues for fear of retaliatory action on the part of the corporation or its representatives. Similarly it is possible that state-owned enterprise will, in one way or another, influence the thinking of many citizens associated with that particular enterprise. Clearly this is an area in which both practical and philosophical considerations need careful examination. Especially at the high school and college level, these concepts need thorough examination to the end that our citizens may be intelligent about the various issues concerned. Such education is not a process of indoctrination but a careful inquiry with regard to facts and issues, conducted in the very spirit of the free society for which such education seeks to prepare young people.

Not enough attention has been given in American education to the effect of sheer size on an industry or a community, or, for that matter, on an educational institution. The curse of bigness is no idle phrase or mere illusion. Big business, big labor, big government and big education all make their impact on the freedom of the individual to think, live and function as a member of society. We should have a better understanding of the effects of bigness in all these areas. Decentralization may ultimately be our only answer in industry, in government and in education, but we shall not decentralize wisely or in timely fashion unless education gives more attention to the relationship between the size of an economic, political, or educational unit and the degree of human freedom prevailing within it.

There is grave danger of unrealistic attitudes in relation to a free society and a free economy. The proportion of people in the world who would be willing to go hungry to be intellectually free is probably far smaller than most of us believe. Individually many of us may be convinced that freedom is more important than economic security, but we shall not be effective in talking to hungry

men about the glories of freedom. To the vast majority of the people who now inhabit the earth, the question of where they can get the next meal is of far greater importance than philosophical questions of intellectual freedom. Unless we in the western democracies recognize this fact, we are likely to utilize unrealistic and unsound strategy in furthering the cause of freedom. A thorough-going education in the facts of the economic world is here indicated. Such education should begin in the elementary school and continue throughout not only high school and college but the entire span of adult life.

#### **Release of Productive Capacity**

The present productivity of the American economy has not only given us a standard of living beyond that in any other country, but the imbalance between the productivity and that of other nations is creating world-wide problems which we have undertaken to solve through such devices as the Marshall Plan and loans to foreign countries. More recently President Truman's Point Four program looms as a still further effort in equalizing economic opportunity in various parts of the world. Yet striking as our production records are when compared to those in most other parts of the world, they are not nearly as high as they should be or could be. Here we are confronted with a large number of serious but removable obstacles. For one thing, there seems to be a very direct relationship between education and economic wellbeing. In our own country subordination of the Negro and lack of educational opportunities for millions of children and young people still limit our productive capacity. We have surpluses at the present moment of butter and other foods and, at the same time we have inadequate consumption of these same articles by millions of our own people. Widespread educational and economic opportunities for our own people would provide

us with the markets we need for our surplus production and greatly increase our general prosperity. Yet millions of our people do not understand the importance of education in relation to a prosperous economy. Business leaders at times are active in holding down tax rates for educational purposes and thereby limiting the educational opportunities for our young people, thus ultimately putting a ceiling on their own business opportunities.

In view of the world-wide conflict between democracy and totalitarianism, it is paramount to remember that in the last analysis a free economy will survive only if it proves to be effective in releasing the productive and creative capacities of our people. Moreover, with our present world-wide responsibilities, we need the creative capacities of every single individual in our own country. We need also to stimulate the productive capacities of people everywhere in the world. We must discover the patterns of economic organization which will provide the best incentives for a high production. To this end the effect of taxation, of wage levels, of retirement schemes, and various other forms of social security must be examined. It is at least possible that the so-called welfare state may prove to be a good investment from the standpoint of improving the productive capacity of our people. It may actually make for higher profits and higher wages due to a better state of mind, better health, and the higher morale on the part of the individual worker. There are of course a great many unsolved problems in this area, but ~~prejudice~~, gross selfish attitudes, and ignorance of the economic issues involved can only lead us into a blind reaction which will injure all and benefit none.

#### **Problems of Distribution**

While even in the area of production we have a long way to go, the problem of distribution looms even more baffling

on the economic front. The economics of distribution is not understood by any considerable section of our population. To most of us it seems a very baffling business made up of complex costs, a multiplicity of middlemen, as well as many hidden problems that we do not understand. Most of us feel that distribution costs are far too high and that the consumer is the victim of a near conspiracy in this area. This is not the place to pass judgment upon these views, but merely to indicate that as consumers we shall probably never be able to deal effectively with the problem of distribution until we have greater understanding of the economic issues involved. Those who have studied the co-operatives in Sweden are quite unanimous in the belief that these interesting experiments have had a very definite outcome in the way of better economic understanding on the part of the members, quite aside from their effect on prices and other aspects of the economy. Here again we need dispassionate and unbiased examination of facts and discussion of values in the free market of opinion, which should characterize both our education and our society.

### **International Trade**

In no area is the need for up-to-date economic understanding more evident than in relation to international trade. Within a relatively few decades we have changed our international position from that of a debtor to a creditor nation. Both our tariffs and our regulations concerning international trade have their origin and development in that period in our history when we bought more than we sold in the international market. The case of Great Britain is illustrative. The United States has been selling the United Kingdom three times as much as it buys from that country. Simultaneously, it is of the greatest importance to the United States that Great Britain be kept strong in an economic way. Yet the dollar shortage is Britain's

greatest single problem. Also it is clear that unless British exports to the United States can be increased there is no permanent solution for the dollar problem. Rapidly the United States is being driven by its own power into the position of being about the only nation that can buy in the international market. Clearly other nations cannot continue to buy from us unless they can also sell to us. While momentarily we may be enjoying a great prosperity, we must not delude ourselves into the belief that we can continue to sell in the international market unless we also buy in that market in somewhere near equal proportion. Yet proposed alterations in our tariffs and other foreign trade regulations meet with sharp opposition in many quarters. Witness the demand for higher protective tariffs immediately following the British devaluation of the pound. It is clear, that at present we in America do not understand the importance of international trade to our national well-being or to world stability, nor do we realize the degree to which our own prosperity is dependent upon the prosperity and well-being of other peoples. Because some other countries are not prosperous, it is necessary for the American taxpayer to deal with the problem through such devices as the Marshall Plan. It might be wiser and sounder in the long run to admit more foreign goods to the United States. The result might be lower prices to the consumer, lower taxes, and less interference on the part of government with the incentives to business activity. In any case, here is a vast area for study, an area rich in educational experiences and full of problems that have implications, not only on the economic front, but in the field of diplomacy, international relations, and educational philosophy. If the problems in foreign trade are to be understood by our people, it is clear that a far larger proportion of the educational program has to be devoted to the various social understandings on which intelligent citizenship in this area must be based.

In this discussion of economic education, we have said little about the moral and spiritual aspects of the present domestic and international scene. If we in America are true to our democratic values we must not be guilty of viewing economic problems in isolation. If we neglect the human considerations in the solution of these problems we shall immediately be adjudged to be guilty of dollar diplomacy and a kind of rugged individualism in the domestic scene which subordinates human welfare to profits. Both of these courses of action will destroy us in the long run, and nothing is more important to us in the world-wide struggle for freedom than to be sure that we practice what we preach, both at home and abroad. One of the reasons we do not practice what we preach any more effectively than we do is that we really do not understand our own preaching. We talk about human brotherhood without realizing that there are millions of Americans for whom this brotherhood means very little—perhaps because of the color of their skin. We are justly proud of our many humanitarian achievements, but in this pride we often forget that millions of our citizens are ill-clothed, poorly housed, and poorly fed, as well as poorly educated. All these deficiencies in our own society present us with economic problems that we must understand better if we are to do something about them. Our willingness to solve them, as well as our ability to solve them, will depend upon our concern for moral and spiritual values.

In our discussion of totalitarianism we frequently point to the disregard of totalitarian societies for religion and for the dignity of the individual. Without doubt this accusation is justified, but we cannot continue to make it unless we can demonstrate by our own life and action that we in a free society have a real concern for all individual human beings regardless of color or creed or economic status. In other words, economic education in America must be soundly based upon a true social democracy. We take pride in being

a Christian nation. Our whole Judaic-Christian tradition has stressed human values, justice and human brotherhood. No consideration of the problems of industry, of capital, of production, distribution, and international trade can serve us in a democratic program of education unless such education gives a central place to the moral and spiritual values that are basic to our conception of life.

In the present cold war for human freedom our opponents believe that we shall ultimately lose because our economic system will fail us. The only way we can prove them wrong, and the only way we can make human freedom a reality, is to give our citizens the economic attitude and understanding that will equip them to develop sound economic policies and which will make our economic system a foundation for freedom rather than a source of weakness in crises. Such education will be effective as it examines the issues clearly in the free market of opinion which should prevail in every school and college. It will have meaning and power as it is conducted in the true spirit of democracy and as it is dominated by a concern for moral and spiritual values.

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Dr. Ernest O. Melby is Dean of the School of Education at New York University.

## **THE JOINT COUNCIL ON ECONOMIC EDUCATION**

**G. Derwood Baker**

There seems to be general agreement that economic problems are among the most pressing and persistent issues which confront our society. The ideological split between the western and eastern powers which threatens the peace of the world is based on conflicting theories of economic organization and of the relationship of individuals to their governments. The leadership of our own nation in this political and ideological struggle is largely dependent upon our economic strength and our ability to revive the war weakened economies of western Europe and to help backward peoples strengthen their economies and raise the standard of living of their peoples.

To provide the resources for world leadership, it is essential that our own productive capacity and standard of living be maintained at ever higher levels, but the events of the past two decades have brought vast changes in the power relationships in our own economic and political life. Institutional relationships have changed, organized labor and government have achieved new power and status and business men and business organizations have lost the dominant position they once held. The total costs of government have reached proportions which are virtually unmanageable. The government, under the Employment Act of 1946, has adopted the policy and assumed the responsibility of maintaining high levels of production and employment. We are committed to the protection of farm prices and seem to be moving in the direction of guaranteeing the income of the farmer. We are striving to revive world trade but are afraid of foreign competition in our own markets. We are proud of our mass production industries but we fear

monopolies and want to preserve the opportunity for small business to organize and prosper. We believe in the right of laboring men to organize and bargain collectively, but we are concerned lest the power of organized labor shall be used unwisely. We are confused by deficit financing and monetary controls. We long for security and stability, but we fear governmental planning and state controls.

The last two decades have profoundly changed our economic life and our social institutions. The change has been revolutionary, but as James Marshall points out, "Some folks don't know a revolution when they see it." Further change in our political, social and economic institutions is inevitable but the critical question before the American people is—in what directions shall these changes take us? How can we manage our economy without sacrificing our democratic institutions and values? These are questions which, in a democracy, have to be answered by the public and they can only be answered wisely by an informed public. They are, therefore, questions of the utmost importance to education and to the public schools which have the responsibility of preparing a generation capable of dealing intelligently with them.

Education for democratic citizenship and civic competence has been a major objective of public education in this country for more than a quarter century. Civic education has generally been construed to include a knowledge of the history of our country and its political institutions, of the structure and function of local, state and national government and some training in the privileges, duties and responsibilities of political citizenship. In this area, it is generally conceded that the schools have done a good though by no means a perfect job. At least we can point with some pride to rising standards of political responsibility, to the virtual elimination of corrupt political machines and to greater efficiency in government at all levels. The average citizen is better informed and more disposed to exercise in-

dependent judgment than in 1910 and this accomplishment is undoubtedly due in part to programs of civic education in the public schools.

However, in today's world, political competence is not enough. The great majority of current political issues hinge on questions of finance and economic policy; and in his role as consumer, worker, farmer, professional or business man each individual is called upon to make decisions which influence and shape the character of our political, social and economic institutions. Votes are being cast at the ballot box and cash register. Influence is being exerted through union organizations, trade associations, professional organizations and social groups. The problem of preparing youth for economic citizenship is a relatively new problem and one with which our public education program must come to grips.

Some members of the faculty of the School of Education at New York University began a study of this problem in the summer of 1947 and came to the conclusion that the public schools are poorly equipped for providing youth with the tools and skills for understanding our distinctively American economic institutions. The curriculum gives scant attention to economic institutions, problems and issues. Appropriate materials of instruction are scarce and, most critical of all, the teachers in elementary and secondary schools have had little training in economic affairs. They share the uncertainty, doubts and confusion of the public in general. It seemed to this group that they had identified an area for curriculum development and teacher training that should be brought to the attention of the leaders in American education and they set about developing a plan. It was concluded that if a representative group of curriculum experts could meet for a few weeks with some of our most competent research economists they might be able to achieve a realistic view of the problem and develop a plan for a national curriculum and teacher training movement in this

area of civic competence. Two discussion-planning sessions were held with curriculum specialists and economists from research foundations, governmental agencies, business and labor organizations participating. A plan and a program were evolved and a financial grant for the project was approved by the Committee for Economic Development.

These planning sessions resulted in the first New York University Workshop on Economic Education, held in the summer of 1948, which was attended by official representatives from 33 city school systems, seven state departments of education and the United States Office of Education. Fellowships were granted covering room and board and in most instances travel expenses were met by the local boards of education. It was a highly selected group, brought together to take a fresh, unbiased view of our economy: what it produces, how the product is distributed and the factors which contribute to its stability and instability, to full employment and unemployment, to high productivity and low productivity.

The Workshop was housed on the campus of the Riverdale School for Boys, Riverdale-on-Hudson, New York City, enabling the group to get acquainted quickly and work together in sessions that typically ran from 9:15 a.m. to 9:15 p.m.

The staff of the Workshop included G. Derwood Baker, Professor of Education, New York University; Cecil L. Dunn, Professor of Economics, Occidental College; A. D. H. Kaplan, Senior Staff Member, Brookings Institution; G. Robert Koopman, Associate Superintendent, State Department of Public Instruction, Michigan; Mark Starr, Educational Director, International Ladies Garment Workers Union; and Sylvia Stone, Assistant to Research Director, Committee for Economic Development.

To assist on special problems more than twenty consultants were brought in to work with the group for a single session or for as long as three days. Consultants were se-

cured from research foundations, J. Frederic Dewhurst, Richard B. Hefflebower and E. J. Coil; from government, Edwin G. Nourse, S. Morris Livingston and Corwin Edwards; from university departments of economics, Edward Mason, Roy Blough and G. E. Brandow; from organized labor, Solomon Barkin, David Kaplan and Harry Uviller; and from business, James F. Brownlee, Beardsley Ruml and Frank M. Surface.

The core of the lecture-discussion sessions was based on national income analysis, a technique now widely used in research but an interpretative tool which has only recently made its appearance at the college level. Against this background of data other sessions attacked a number of the more critical and urgent socio-economic problems of the day. Committees, groups and individuals worked on a variety of problems and individually selected assignments. There were assemblies, group meetings, and discussions in dormitory rooms and over coffee counters that lasted far beyond scheduled hours. Ideas, solutions, and attitudes sometimes clashed and differences had to be faced. A variety of group techniques were employed for discussion and the resolving of differences of opinion.

The questions with which the Workshop dealt admit no simple or easy solution. What are the facts about our economic system which every citizen should know? What are suitable objectives for economic understanding at the secondary school level? What materials are available, or needed, for use in the classroom? How can community resources be utilized? What visual aids can enliven the program? What is democratic policy regarding controversial issues? How may the findings of educational and psychological research be used to implement classroom procedures?

Morning, afternoon and evening, for three weeks, staff and participants grappled with these questions. Chief among the points of agreement was this: American high schools need to do a much better job in the teaching of eco-

nomic understanding if our industrialized and interdependent society is to succeed in coping with its problems. Further, there was unanimous agreement that the New York University Workshop had merely broken ground. If its effects were to be significant for American Education as a whole, it would be necessary to establish means for a continuing study and an expanding program.

Accordingly, at one of the final sessions, staff and participants voted that the entire Workshop constitute itself as the Interim Committee on Economic Education. Individually the participants undertook the responsibility of developing resources for improving economic education in their own regions and collectively they elected an Executive Board to whom they assigned the responsibility of carrying forward the general program and developing a permanent organization. During the fall, the Executive Board consulted with representatives of other educational organizations and with business and labor leaders on its organizational problems and at a meeting in January, 1949, formally established and incorporated the Joint Council on Economic Education.

Developments since the formation of the Joint Council seem to justify the hope and confidence of its founding members. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the National Association of Secondary School Principals of the N.E.A. have affiliated with the Joint Council. Regional councils on economic education have been formed by its members in Iowa, the Upper Midwest, Michigan and at Hartford, Connecticut, with business and labor leaders joining with school and university representatives in promoting local programs for economic study and teacher training. Seminar and lecture-discussion series have been organized in Philadelphia, Flint, Michigan, Baltimore and New York City. In Baltimore 400 teachers and citizens are attending a fourteen session weekly series of meetings addressed by competent economists and edu-

cators from their city, Washington, D. C. and New York. During the summer of 1949, the Joint Council cooperated with the University of Minnesota and Michigan State College in developing economic workshops for teachers in their regions and a second national workshop was sponsored by New York University.

At these workshops teachers have prepared resource materials and guides for classroom teachers which are receiving wide distribution and use. A new movement is making its influence felt in American education. Eight hundred teachers have participated in the workshops, seminars and in-service programs sponsored by the Joint Council. For the summer of 1950, the Council is co-sponsoring workshops in Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and New York. Each of these projects has been initiated by Council members—workshoppers from that region. Upon invitation the chairman of the Joint Council has been available to assist in program planning and in securing competent staff members and consultants for local or regional programs. In some instances the Joint Council has been able to assist in securing local financial support for workshop programs; funds to provide fellowships for those participating, to provide a staff of the highest caliber and to provide a followup service. Curriculum reorganization is not likely to go far if reliance is placed solely on the voluntary, spare-time efforts of inadequately paid and overburdened teachers.

The Joint Council is a non-profit, educational organization created to assist school systems and teacher training institutions improve the quality of social and economic education through curriculum research, workshops, seminars, in-service training programs, the publication of reports and the preparation of materials for teachers and pupils. It hopes to stimulate and co-ordinate the efforts of professional and lay groups which are interested in improving economic education and are committed to our democratic

tradition of academic freedom and academic responsibility. The Council will not promote the special interest of any group, engage in propaganda activities, nor attempt to influence legislative action. It has no economic program to impose or any fixed curricular pattern to propose. It seeks only to coordinate the interested members of the teaching profession and the community in protecting and developing our American heritage.

The area of economic understanding offers education the opportunity to work co-operatively with business, management, labor, government and economic research on the problems vital to the survival of democracy and our economic institutions. Teachers, supervisors, school administrators and boards of education are invited to co-operate with the Joint Council on Economic Education in developing programs of civic education that deepen our understanding of economic affairs.

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G. Derwood Baker is Professor of Secondary Education in the School of Education at New York University. He is Chairman of the Joint Council on Economic Education.

## **ECONOMIC EDUCATION IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

**Howard Cummings**

Since the purpose of the Joint Council on Economic Education is to improve the teaching of economics in the secondary schools and since we base our reason for being on the fact that high school students are not receiving adequate training to meet economic issues we might look at the statistical picture to discover what the economics state of affairs really is.

The term "economics" began to be used to describe a curriculum subject in 1900 and the older designation of "political economy" was dropped. From 1900 to 1920 the subject gained a foothold in the curriculum. It was usually offered for one semester and shared the 12th grade with sociology and civics. Since some states required that civics be taught, the student could elect sociology or economics to fill out a full year of social studies. Then in 1916 the term "Problems of American Democracy" appeared and threatened the existence of all three of the separate courses. Three factors probably account for their survival.

1. The legal requirement that civics be taught.
2. The desire of teachers for the separate subjects.
3. The convenience to the school principal of the three half-unit course as an element of flexibility in an otherwise inflexible program consisting for the most part of courses running for two semesters.

However, the fact that economics was elective and that it was usually offered in the 12th grade where a number of subjects compete for the time of the more advanced students probably accounts for the relatively low enrollment in economics.

That enrollment was relatively low is proved by the first report on pupil enrollment in economics at the high school

level made in 1922 in *Offerings and Registration in High School Subjects* by the U. S. Office of Education. Economics enrolled 103,540 of the 2,155,460 reported, or 4.8 percent of the number reporting. In 1928, with 630 schools reporting, the number was 147,035 from a total of 2,896,630, or 5.08 percent. The 1928 report was the high water mark in percentage but not in numbers. In 1934 enrollment in economics rose to 221,874 but the percentage was only 4.93.<sup>1</sup> This was the last report on enrollment. In 1946-47 a sampling was made of 449 schools. This showed that economics and economic problems accounted for 2.7 percent of all social studies enrollment. United States history accounted for 33.8 percent, world history 19.3 percent and civics and citizenship for 14.1 percent of the total social studies enrollment. These three courses, all of which showed percentage increases since the 1933-34 report, accounted for 67.2 percent of all social studies in the schools sampled. In summary it seems that:

1. Two-thirds of the present social studies enrollment is in history, civics and citizenship
2. Enrollment in economics has never included more than 5.08 percent of students attending high school
3. That it declined to 4.93 in 1934 and on the basis of the evidence available continued to decline between 1934 and 1946

It should be said at once that the estimate made above has not included all the economic content taught in high school courses. However there have been no statistical reports on what is included in courses other than economics. Some economics material is included in the following courses:

1. "Problems of American Democracy." However, Dr. Anderson's report estimates that only 4.3 percent of students in social studies courses take "American Problems." In 1934 it was 4.4.
2. History courses are gradually including more materials from the field of economics.

3. New courses have been added to the curriculum in consumer education and conservation, which deal with phases in economics. Courses in group guidance give information on occupational fields and considerable economic education comes from the work in individual guidance.
4. Three other areas in the curriculum contain economic materials. These are home economics, business education and vocational agriculture. The work done in some of these courses is excellent but their limitations for economic education are obvious. They reach only pupils enrolled in the particular course and they treat only those economic topics of special concern to that particular subject.

In schools where all or a part of the curriculum is developed on the basis of the needs of youth the picture is difficult to report in any statistical framework. Economic outcomes in terms of learning are not separated from other learnings which result from pupil experiences. Even with a small number of schools reporting it is hard to make a report by subjects.

While consideration of methods is important in considering the outcomes from courses in economics they are not unique to teaching economics. Good teaching methods apply to all subjects. However from observation and from the opinion of supervisors the following picture it sketched:

Teaching methods used by the various teachers in the typical large high school, when considered collectively, make an historical profile of the development of educational method over the last quarter century. High points in the profile from 1925 seem to be as follows:

1. Few teachers continue to lecture but a factual question and answer recitation period based on a text assignment is still common.
2. "Thought questions" used in a Socratic fashion replace or supplement factual questions. The nature of

the assignment, daily textbook reading, remains the same.

3. The socialized recitation, teacher led, replaces the question-answer pattern. Assignments are in larger units based on major ideas or areas, supplementary books are used, audio-visual aids are integrated into unit assignments.
4. Many techniques are used. Pupil-teacher planning replaces assignments, community resources are used, panels and forums are organized, reports are made. The teacher guides the process as a counsellor and advisor. Full use is made of all resources. Growth of the pupil in individual competence and group relations are the major objectives of the course. Areas studied have some relations to the problems of youth in contemporary society.

Two facts become apparent to any observer who visits a school where these various teaching techniques are used:

1. The newer techniques meet with a much better pupil response than any of the older methods. Pupils are more alert, take their responsibilities more seriously and participate in the class activities as a matter of course. Tests results, even on factual material, are as good as those in groups, taught by more conventional methods. Research studies support these conclusions. Supervisors departing from a school always voice the wish, "if all teaching could only be like that done by Miss X" Stated in the language of textbook on methods, there is a great need to translate the latest research into effective classroom practice. Research proves the new methods are good. But too many classrooms show the old variety.
2. The newer techniques can be used in any school with any group of pupils. The evidence for this can be obtained in almost any large school in the country. After listening to all the reasons why newer techniques can-

not be used in a particular school from teachers who are not using them, the supervisor finds one teacher who is doing "the impossible" with excellent results.

A third area which requires consideration is that of teacher training, both pre-service and in-service.

The attention of economists today is directed increasingly toward such problems as providing full employment, increasing the national income, making maximum use of natural resources, safeguarding security while maintaining incentives, and economic relationships between individuals and groups in society. However the time lag which keeps newer findings in educational research from reaching classes in methods delays the most recent research in economics from entering courses where teachers are trained.

There are three immediate needs which should be met to improve the teaching of economics in the high schools:

1. Improvement in classroom teaching methods is a general need and is not unique to economics.
2. Better courses in economics for teachers which utilize the thinking of leading contemporary economists.
3. A revision of current courses to provide an economic frame of reference for functional courses like consumer education, vocational guidance, general business practice and conservation. At the same time classical economics courses, where they survive, should be modified to conform to the national income approach. Such an approach helps the pupil to see the whole picture of our economy. His personal problems, the problems of his group, city or region can then be identified as a part of the whole picture.

<sup>1</sup>Based on *Biennial Survey of Education*, 1933-34. United States Department of the Interior, Office of Education Bulletin 1938, No. 6, Washington, Government Printing Office, 1938.

<sup>2</sup>Howard R. Anderson, *Teaching of United States History in Public High Schools, An Inquiry into Offerings and Registrations, 1946-47*. Federal Security Agency, Office of Education, Bulletin 1949, No. 7. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1949, page 6.

Howard Cummings is Assistant Specialist for Government and Economics, Division of Elementary and Secondary Schools, U.S. Office of Education.

## **LABOR'S STAKE IN ECONOMIC EDUCATION**

**Mark Starr**

Labor's stake in economic education arises directly from the fact that labor unions are primarily economic organizations. Their basic job is to win for their members a shorter work week and higher wages and also to improve the conditions under which their members obtain a livelihood. Both as a producer and a consumer, organized labor forms an important section of the community. Fifteen million organized trade unionists constitute a large bloc in the 42 million men and women who work for wages and salaries in the United States. Together with their families they are a powerful influence upon public policy. Hence, what they know or do not know about the economic facts of life may have important consequences.

In the past, Labor has been grossly neglected by the schools. Many youngsters have left grade school and high school either uninformed, or possibly misinformed, about the role of the union in promoting community welfare.\* This is ironical because of the continued aid which the trade unions have given to education. Right from the Workingmen's Political Party in Philadelphia in 1827, down to the current support of federal aid for education given by the CIO, the AFL and other labor groups, the unions have perhaps done more than any other single agency to support the public school. Labor has done this because it believes in equality of opportunity and realizes that we cannot exercise our democratic rights and responsibilities unless the majority of our citizens are well informed.

To be sure, school textbooks now have more to say about the trade unions than previously. Occasionally representatives of trade unions at national and local levels are asked to participate in school ceremonies and graduation exercises.

A few labor leaders have actually received honorary degrees from colleges. However, various surveys have shown that Labor is still very inadequately represented in school governing bodies. For example, the *NEA Journal*, February, 1946, reported an investigation of 3068 school boards which showed that 35 per cent of school board members were proprietors and executives and 18.8 per cent, professional workers. It also found that the median personal income of the board members was \$7516 in the large towns and \$3235 in the small towns. In the rural districts the investigation found that 42 per cent of the members were farmers, 21 per cent proprietors and executives and 8.8 per cent professional people.

In part, this lack of representation on school boards and in education generally is due to Labor's own blindness to its stake in economic education. However, the situation is changing for the better. One outstanding example of improvement is the Labor History Week run in East Side High School, Newark, N. J. In the closing weeks of the civics classes, local union leaders were invited to participate as supplementary teachers, explaining the history and activities of their own organizations and their role in community life.

Labor has suffered from misinterpretation as well as neglect. One does not need to search far to discover specific examples of fallacies in economics to be found in school teaching and textbooks which do injustice to Labor. In the first place, there still continues the artificial distinction between the liberal (literary) arts and the vocational and mechanical skills. Unconsciously the student acquires a snobbish attitude toward manual labor.

The student, of course, has already been subjected to the distortion of the normal activities of trade unions through newspaper headlines which play up a strike on Page #1 and play down its settlement on Page 21. The same newspapers exaggerate the exceptional cases of racketeering union lead-

ers with similar ill effects. Too often the students have only a negative concept of organized labor. They hear about strikes but seldom learn that days lost by strikes are only a fraction of the total days worked—the ratio in 1948 being one to 270. This makes it all the more necessary that in high school, when youngsters stand on the threshold of industry, they should be given correct information about the real functions of unions throughout their long history.

As a recent report of the Treasury Department shows, the total income of all trade unions in the United States for the year 1946 was less than 5 per cent of the revenue of all tax-exempt organizations. The union income of \$477,701,000, most of which was expended in administrative expenses and benefit payments, is well below the \$502 million of the net profits of one corporation, General Motors, for the first nine months of 1949.

The individual unions retain autonomy inside their federations and there are many local variations even in the case of nationwide bargaining. The monolithic unity of Labor is, upon examination, non-existent. (In comparison, one might vote that 250 of the largest corporations in U.S.A. control about two-thirds (2/3) of all the manufacturing facilities; four large steel companies control 63 per cent of the total steel ingot production.)

On a par with the charge of monopoly is the misrepresentation of the "union shop." Here, in essence, the member who enjoys superior union conditions is expected to pay union dues or work elsewhere. Obviously, to maintain good conditions, the union has to represent the union members and to organize non-union members where necessary. Dues are the union's support and are analogous to taxes which citizens pay to sustain government services. In the old pre-Wagner Act days, an employer sometimes gave a company union to the workers, but this is now outlawed. The unions have a stake in teaching the truth about such matters.

Teachers should let the record of Labor speak for itself

as to what it has done for economic betterment and health in the community. That record would show the crusade against the sweatshop and the collective self-help by which workers have increased their wages and reduced the work week down to 40 and 35 hours, as compared to the old sun-up to sundown toil, six days a week. The histories of education in the United States give quotations from Horace Mann and other pioneers which acknowledge Labor's aid in the campaign for free education, already referred to.

Labor has a stake in economic education to remove misconceptions in the public mind and in the school about its alleged opposition to the introduction of new methods and machines and to remove false ideas about the extent of "featherbedding." Reluctance to see existing jobs abolished or merged is, of course, linked to the fear of unemployment and the general insecurity which provoke the workers, in some instances, to resort to anti-social behavior and restrictions of production. These instances are exaggerated while the many beneficent deeds of the unions are ignored. Luckily, the unions themselves are becoming much more hospitable to investigations and inquiries on this point. For example, in the weekly *Labor*, Oct. 22, 1949, there is an examination of the charge that restrictions are practiced in the building trades and a refutation of the oft repeated accusations.

The role of Labor in worker-management cooperation and its achievements in preventing strikes before they start are also part of a record easily available to the intelligent teacher in economic education. The current controversy about pensions—contributory or non-contributory—could be utilized by the alert teacher to discuss the current modern trend of unions which attempt to secure protection for their members, not only in the workshop but outside, and in periods of sickness and old age, as well as of unemployment.

Economic fallacies loaded against Labor abound in many areas of economic teaching. There is the widespread "vi-

cious circle" which asserts that any increase in the worker's wage is automatically transferred to the price of the product. The curious student might be encouraged to ask why then did the employer resist a demand for an increase and why should he wait for a threatened strike in order to increase the price of his product? This would lead to an examination of the proportion of labor costs to total costs of production; of the effect upon prices of competition, inside each industry and between industries; of the limits even to monopoly prices; and of the reduction of potential profits by wage increases. The student could easily check the record to see whether there was causal connection over the years between increases in wages and increases in prices, and whether prices of some commodities had gone down while wages in the same industry had gone up. This would lead to an estimate of increased productivity in relation to wages, profits and prices. The role of the union in increasing that productivity when it is assured of participation in some of its results would afford a good lesson to the boys and girls who soon themselves will become a part of the work force of our country.

Economic education would study the results upon our economy of low incomes. (The Joint Congressional Committee on Low Income Families reported in November, 1949, that 10 million families [32 million persons] and 6 million single individuals have incomes of less than \$2000 a year.) It would not be difficult to explain to high school students the difference between nominal, real and relative wages, and this would be helpful to understand rates of pay in this and other countries. Some knowledge of the banking system and of credit is surely a modern requirement.

On the positive side, Labor is using more technicians than formerly and the better their economic education in high school, the more effective their service as accountants, journalists, researchers and engineers. Union members should be able to anticipate trends and modify union policy

accordingly. They should be able to fight with facts instead of the old-fashioned fists, and it is not enough for only union *leaders* to know what is happening in industry. Each union member should know his rights and responsibilities and be a factor in creating opinion in his union meeting and among the general public. Nowadays a union member should be able to understand the complications of health plans and pension schemes and the administration problems involved.

Supplementary to the usual economic studies, members of labor unions as participants in a collective economic organization should know that "the tendency of living things to form societies is coeval with life itself." That *fusion* not *fission* "whether in physics or human affairs... comes much closer to reflecting man's natural behaviour patterns."<sup>1</sup>

Even in modern mechanized large-scale production human beings are important. Coal mines are only holes in the ground without the human coal diggers. All the most intricate and clever machines in the factories would soon be headed for the junk heap, rusted away into useless iron and steel, without the attention of human beings to feed and tend and mend those machines. The magic of compound interest, which increases a fortune into a bigger fortune while its owner sleeps, operates because some people are sweating it out in mill, mine and factory.

Too many people forget the importance of human beings as such. We talk about risk capital and forget who bears the risk. We forget that a worker is killed every four minutes in the industry of the United States. We talk about our high rate of productivity in the mines and forget that our fatality and accident rate is also the highest. Human beings and human resources deserve conservation as well as oil and minerals and soil.

As the biggest single group of parents, trade union members are vitally concerned with the importance given to education and also with its aim. It seems that in 1947 the

American people spent \$68.57 per capita for liquor and \$26.43 per capita for tobacco, while in the same year the per capita expenditure for education was \$17.76. Attempts to alter those figures can be made only if Labor understands its stake in improving education both in quality and quantity. There can be little doubt that so far our high schools have emphasized practical professional advancement. The *Fortune* survey in September, 1949, showed that "Desire and ability to be a useful citizen ranked low in the tabulations when parents were asked what they thought college should do for their children." *Fortune's* survey comments "Educators have talked a great deal about the responsibility of the universities to train people for citizenship, but their words seem to have had little effect."

Because the labor unions represent the largest section of our citizenry, they naturally are interested in a higher quality of citizenship. We need far more cooperation between Labor, intelligent Management and the School to give a greater social significance to our education. This should mean planning for freedom by the actual participants in our industrial life. It means building up a group intelligence with a recognition of the indispensability of mutual aid between individuals in modern society. It means more alert and informed employes and employers. It would make possible a welfare state in the best meaning of that term with all working for the community well-being—"more givers than takers...producers rather than extractors."

Labor's stake in economic education is vital because such education is the indispensable base of intelligent citizenship in an advancing community.

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\* "Labor Looks at Education" (Inglis Lecture) Harvard University Press, 1946, describes this neglect in greater detail than is possible here.

<sup>1</sup> (See M. F. Ashley Montagu, "Man and the Social Appetite," *Saturday Review of Literature*, Nov. 19, 1949, for elaboration of this idea.)

Mark Starr is the Educational Director, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

## **OBJECTIVITY — THE KEY TO ECONOMIC UNDERSTANDING**

**John Hancock**

Economic understanding is hard to come by. But, nevertheless, it is imperative that young people, now in our high schools, be given the tools to acquire that understanding. It is impossible to read a daily newspaper without realizing that economics is involved in the major events reported. Future citizens will need to be more intelligent about the need for balancing the budget or the effects of deficit spending, about the complexities of world trade, about savings and capital investment, about the many other questions that directly affect their very existence. To make sure that this future citizen develops economic intelligence there must be a program of economic education in our schools.

The problem of economic education is obviously not going to be solved quickly, but the way to go at it is to build on the interest where it now exists. The quick response by businessmen and educators alike to the value of a joint exploration of local economic problems and the results achieved to date by the Joint Council on Economic Education show the effectiveness of this method. These experiments resemble a "pilot plant" where the "bugs" are gotten out of the process. The diversity in the character of the experiments may be one of the healthiest things about them.

I believe we will learn that there are three or four "best" ways of doing this job of education in local and national economic problems. The results will depend on the plan adopted and the capacity of the people who operate it. Any plan must be in the hands of people who enjoy the confidence of their own communities, and these local groups should be free from any pressure from any group to adopt any part of a program.

I assume we all start with the conviction that our economy must have the broadest possible democratic basis of acceptance and understanding—an understanding possessed by our business leaders, our leaders in labor, government, and on the farm; our students and our teachers. It must necessarily be broad because our freedom is a personal, individual, democratic thing, and we each must understand not only why we are free, but how we can remain free. We must recognize that to be free politically and socially we must also be free economically. We must also recognize that in *working together* on our common problems we achieve strength. In this unity we find our democracy's greatest strength.

In our country we have been inclined to take our economic system for granted. Each of us has been concerned with developing his own business and professional success within the framework provided by our system but without much specific regard for the system itself. Sometimes it has seemed as if we didn't have a system as such, though we did glorify individual rights and responsibilities. That was the framework in which we worked. It was the result of the evolutionary process through which our people had passed.

The time has now come, however, for us to organize our thinking around ways and means of strengthening our economy, of knowing what we want to do with it, how we want it to operate, and why we want it to continue. We cannot win this objective merely by making or listening to addresses, making or seeing motion pictures about free enterprise, or by publishing or reading newspaper advertisements about it. We can win it only by personally working over it, discussing issues, analyzing them in relation to the common good, and spreading the results of this work to others.

Economic policies today are controversial, complex, and too mixed up with political implications. We vastly need objective thinking, a cool process of fact-finding, fact-processing, and factual analysis. Certainly we citizens of

the United States must learn objectively what *we want* and what *we need* in economic policy before we are ready to chart a full course to economic freedom.

The secret, of course, is *objectivity*. In this search for better understanding of our economic processes, we must turn more to conference and workshop techniques, bringing small groups of competent leaders together in a studious effort to get at the facts and to achieve an objective interpretation of them, and a crusading spirit.

How often have we looked closely at the *economic* foundation of our American communities? Is our teaching on this point adequate? Are our communities acquainted with what makes this country of ours such a successful going concern? Have we ourselves discussed our economic system in such a way that our students understand its importance? Do *we* understand it ourselves?

There seems to be a vast need for our students to understand more about our economy. They and we need to know the elements which make it stable or unstable; what causes good employment and what underlies unemployment. They and we need to know more about the things we produce in relation to the domestic and world need for the products. We need to understand the hard, cold facts of international trade in these days of mixed-up economies.

Unless each group knows that we are all interdependent, we will get nowhere fast. We need to have all groups working *together* on problems. It is this *Togetherness* which has helped put this country where it is. *Togetherness* has helped us to win our major victories. When we, as a person or a group, try to go it alone we are apt to get away from objectivity. No special group has a monopoly of knowledge or experience or power. In this complex time, no one has *all* the answers. Our strength comes from pooling our ideas in order to build the invulnerable concepts of freedom, for which we all are working.

Why do I think this great problem should be tackled by our educators? Because they are competent, because they

are known to be fair-minded, because they are unselfish, because they are public-minded citizens, and so can be truly objective in their search for the truth.

Educating ourselves and our associates and our young people to be alert, solid citizens means we must arm each other with the economic facts of life. We must *know*—not merely believe—how economic conditions affect our country. We must understand our economic system in order to serve it well and in order not to betray it. For instance, we need to understand some of the present knotty problems of international trade and intermeshing economies. There are important decisions in this area which the citizens of this country will have to make and they cannot make them unless they have some basis of good judgment.

I do not mean to suggest that we are grossly ignorant in this country. Far from it. We have a great many facts and fact-finding agencies at work. We need to use them. Few leaders in business really comprehend the American economic system and if they do, they are seldom vocal about it.

I would not presume to suggest that farmers, businessmen, labor leaders and others should not be concerned with their own self-interest. But I submit that the time has now passed when we can afford the luxury of *exclusive* group-interest, for the simple reason that we are interdependent. We must increase the individual citizen's knowledge of his own role as a producer and consumer, of what the profit-and-loss system means, of the value of competition to economic freedom, and of the role of the market in a free economy. There are many ways in which this educational task can be approached. I should like to outline one tested approach which attempts to attain objectivity in its processes. It is the program of economic research in which the Committee for Economic Development generally known as CED, is engaged.

Formed in 1942, CED now includes on its Board of Trustees a number of the country's leaders in education. It is

a non-profit, nonpartisan organization devoted to economic research. It has no connection with any governmental agency or department, although it has the cooperation of government officials, and labor and farm leaders.

Organized originally for the purpose of *studying* the problems involved in transition from a wartime to a peace-time economy, CED today has a two-part program. The first part is devoted to economic and public policy research. Research studies are made and policy statements are issued on a number of vital transition problems, as well as on longer-range problems, such as, international trade, federal taxation, and agriculture.

CED research is conducted through the active personal cooperation of a group of industrialists and businessmen who comprise its Research and Policy Committee, and a group of distinguished economists and social scientists who comprise its Research Advisory Board and its research staff. These groups select together the subjects to be studied. They not only draw upon the men in the CED group but on qualified economists anywhere in the country.

The policy statement is discussed in real debating sessions. In light of the information developed, a new draft is prepared for the next session. The sessions are marked by objectivity on the part of all. Debate is on a high level of tolerance for all conflicting views. This process goes on until the group is ready to present its findings. Some studies have lasted as long as two years. From our own experience, we know it is a tough job to work for objectivity in research, but we are also learning the value of facing facts in seeking to be objective.

The Research and Policy Committee of businessmen issues, in its own name, these statements of national policy. In one such recent study of factors which contribute to our economy in the United States, the Research and Policy Committee of the CED discussed the monetary and fiscal policies which would lead to greater economic stability. What causes business fluctuations, we asked. What sets off movements that carry the whole economy up and down?

We found that the very fact that the economy is free and progressive and prosperous makes it tend to fluctuate—in a word, to be unstable. Why? Because it is free and competitive. Because its behavior is the result of millions of independent, though not unrelated, decisions. Because it is a money economy and individuals and businesses are free to decide what they will do with their money. All the individual decisions that determine the action of the economy are influenced by common information, beliefs and expectations, which expose the economy to mass contagions of optimism or pessimism.

Besides monetary and fiscal policies many other factors must play a part in strengthening our economy: wage-price policies, the structure of markets for labor and goods, agricultural policy, foreign trade and international finance, the construction industry, savings-investment institutions, labor and business policies.

A second interest of CED is in education. The CED Business-Education Committee has cooperated with colleges and universities in developing community research and study centers at the collegiate and adult level and we are pleased to have some part in assisting the Joint Council on Economic Education develop pilot programs from which we and others can learn more about techniques of objective study and how to translate findings into improved methods of teaching economics in the public school system. Through a work-shop program teachers are being provided the opportunity of talking and working with leaders from business, labor and government, men and women whose point of view has been disciplined by years of research. From this experience they have gained not only new information but skill in the analysis of problems—skill and information and inspiration which they will pass on to others in a national program to purify the stream of economic understanding at its source.

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John Hancock is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Committee for Economic Development.

## **PROMOTING ECONOMIC LITERACY THROUGH AMERICAN HISTORY**

**Paul W. Coons**

### **I Functional Economic Orientation**

Strange as it might sound to many students, American History need not be a mausoleum. Teachers can make the secondary American History course functional and vital. This responsibility of the social studies teacher is heightened and thrown into bold relief in the case of American History by the simple fact that more youth take American History than any other social study,—a condition that would exist even if the laws of forty-six states did not require its study. The immediate need is to find in American History opportunities for promoting good citizenship commensurate with popular and professional assumptions as to its efficacy. This is not an easy task. Nevertheless, the modern teacher must search for an approach to the study of our national development in terms of the realities of problems faced by today's youth. If this goal can be achieved, there is hope of transforming customary recital of well-known facts into dynamic consideration of the contributions of historical perspective to today's problems.

The vital questions are: Will pupils attain understandings of value in making their way in a world of baffling complexity? Will their appreciation of democratic principles grow? Will skills be sharpened for use in dealing with multiplying media of communication? Will behavior, in and out of school, show growth toward thinking and living as responsible citizens?

Of this total area, the economic aspects of our history form one important sector. There can be analysis of opportunities to highlight the significance of economic factors; delineation of functions of American History in economic education; and cooperative attempts by teachers to imple-

ment these functions. In short, the American History course can be given economic orientation and made a streamlined instrument of economic literacy. Moreover, this can be done without losing sight of the values commonly attributed to the study of history; rather, it is believed that investigation into the historical roots of contemporary economic problems will dignify and invigorate American History as a builder of responsible citizenship.

## II The Unique Functions of American History in Economic Education

The key to improvement is held mainly by teachers themselves. When they sense the urgency of the challenge, when they work together in local committees or in workshops to clarify objectives and devise means of implementation in harmony with the realities of classroom situations, there is every reason to believe that economic understandings will emerge from instruction in American History.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in a fundamental sense, it is reasonable to suppose that the whole teaching-learning process will be toned up by the effort.

First, teachers will do well to establish in their own minds the special and unique functions of American History in developing economic literacy. Certain things are marginal, incidental, or irrelevant. Such, for instance, would be the attempt to make history a means of mastering economic theory or of cultivating economic competence, though both might conceivably result. More to be deplored would be the perversion of history to promote loyalty to specific economic traditions and dogmas, for this is incompatible with the democratic process of weighing and evaluating all available facts. Again, advocacy of proposals to reform society belongs in another province beside the history classroom.

With functions of economic education that merit little

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<sup>1</sup> See the following publications of the Joint Council on Economic Education: *The Improvement of Economic Understanding*, pp. 28-32, 1948; *Promoting Economic Literacy Through American History*, 1949.

or no emphasis in American History put aside, a search for valid functions is in order.

First, American History can provide a frame of reference needed for sound perspective on economic problems. Insights into historical origins enable students to rise above nationalistic and partisan levels of dealing with issues. Historical considerations prompt understanding of the interdependence of economic and other factors in social evolution. Trends over a considerable period of our history may be traced with resultant awareness that change, interrelationships, and adjustment of economic institutions to social needs may be recognized as features of a dynamic society. Using American History to develop such understandings provides a base for balanced interpretation of contemporary economic trends. At the same time this is the essence of a sound historical approach.

Secondly, American History by its very nature brings the student to consider the profound impact of the American economy upon the world situation and, conversely, the impact of world economic conditions upon our economy. The tariff, our participation in two world wars, the European Recovery Program, Point Four—these are a few of the items which current history thrusts into the forefront of our thinking. Whatever the political and cultural aspects may be, it is certain that the relation between economic situations will loom large as a key to understanding the new world responsibilities of the United States of the mid-twentieth century.

Thirdly, American History can facilitate awareness that economic situations exert vast influence on the development of political and social history, especially on the character of American democracy. From the founding of the colonies to the era of atomic energy, economic forces have played their part—often the dominant part—in determining the policies of political parties, the scope and character of laws and governmental activity. Democracy, as we know it, has deep economic roots in the opportunities afforded by our

resources, in our agrarian independence, in our labor union growth. Realistic treatment of American History in the classroom cannot avoid emphasis on the social and political contributions of economic developments.

Fourthly, the American History classroom has a moral obligation to confront youth with opportunities to evaluate economic propaganda. Intellectual integrity demands it. Preparation for living in a world where propaganda is as abundant as air, and much denser, demands it. What social studies course is more admirably adapted to providing practice in critical evaluation? Such names as Hamilton and Jefferson, Jackson and Calhoun, McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt, Andrew Mellon and Norman Thomas are vivid reminders that conflicting economic views have brought countless Americans into heated clashes in daily conversation as well as in the halls of Congress. Today's youth, who learn to probe into the motives of the protagonists and antagonists of history, will thereby be better able to discern the maneuvers of tomorrow's propagandists.

Granted that history holds a place in general education by virtue of its potentialities as a builder of critical thinking, of sane and wholesome attitudes, and of responsible behavior, it is apparent that the American History teacher plays an important role. Our society has placed in the hands of the common man the power to determine the basic policies that orient our national development. Not only the power to vote, but the power to bargain collectively, the power to influence through educational opportunities, and the power to organize as consumers or to form countless other organizations lie within the grasp of the plain people. Every evidence that today's men and women are determined to hold and wield these powers enhances the significance of the teacher; his role becomes pivotal in a society where every man must learn to think and act as a responsible citizen.

### III Marks of Economic Literacy

Let us appraise more exactly the kind of job that needs to be done. Few would dispute the enumeration of such marks found in the report of a committee of teachers at the New York University-Joint Council on Economic Education Workshop of 1949:

"American History can help a high school student develop understandings, appreciations, and skills leading to sound attitudes and responsible behavior patterns. A student thus affected would bear evidence of the following marks of economic literacy:

1. He understands the importance of economic factors in arriving at political decisions.
2. He understands the interplay of legislation and economic development.
3. He appreciates the characteristics and value of our economic system as compared with other systems.
4. He understands the relationship between inequalities in the distribution of income and social tensions.
5. He understands the development of organized labor.
6. He understands the nature of labor-management relationship.
7. He appreciates the continuing, changing struggle for security.
8. He understands the development of our various forms of productive organizations.
9. He understands how our physical environment influences economic activity.
10. He appreciates the growing need for conserving human and natural resources.
11. He understands how money, banking and credit are vital to our economy.
12. He understands the significance of the development of transportation and communication.
13. He appreciates the part his local community plays in our economic development.
14. He understands the economic interdependence of the peoples of the world.
15. He acquires the ability to locate and use intelligently the media of communication.
16. He acquires a useful economic vocabulary.
17. He acquires the ability to think critically on economic issues and arrive at reasoned judgments."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

**IV Establishing Marks of Economic Literacy**

Equally essential and considerably more difficult is the creation of classroom situations and the development of learning experiences which provide practical means to valid ends. A supervisor or a committee of teachers can state goals and functions and suggest implementation; they may even do so to the applause of colleagues. The classroom teacher, however, alone can build class morale and organize and guide learning activities essential to the realization of sound economic understandings and attitudes. In other words, the aim and implementation must be the teacher's own, either original or adopted; furthermore, students will need to see and desire to attain the end of economic literacy.

What, then, can teachers do? One group of classroom teachers that explored the problem suggested that the first task is to acquire a clear motivation for establishing any specific mark of economic literacy; secondly, to scan the field of American History to determine what salient facts may be used, what historical trends may be discerned, in order to attain perspective and straight thinking on the understanding to be developed.

Thus far, the procedure has been to determine the specific goal and its importance and to acquire and assess knowledge drawn from history that puts one on speaking terms with the facts involved. Let it be parenthetically stated that the procedure would probably not be as mechanical as this description may suggest. For instance, much of the motivation might well derive from discussion of facts long after the experience has begun. Likewise, it may be observed that the process thus far has been, if the classroom is democratically organized, a cooperative venture, with students and teacher participating in arriving at a definition of the understanding.

The third step is crucial, for talking about an understanding does not build it into the experience of a person. There must be experiences that are, at least, vitally intellectual. If

they are emotionally stirring, so much the better. But the ultimate goal is social action.

### **What Then Can Teachers Do?**

A quotation from the New York University-Joint Council study will illustrate the procedure with reference to one of the marks of economic literacy:

(MARK) "He appreciates the characteristics of our economic system as compared with other economic systems.

#### **(STEP I: MOTIVATION)**

Good economic citizenship involves active participation by informed persons who shoulder responsibility because they realize the richness of the American heritage and desire to perpetuate and improve it. Certain characteristics have emerged in the evolution of our system; rights to engage in any business of one's own choice, to invest one's savings, freely to buy and sell, to choose a trade or occupation, to join a labor union, to join with others to determine the role of government in economic activity. Along with these rights go the responsibility to conduct private interests in accord with the public welfare and the responsibility to support policies which would open the doors of opportunity to all.

In a world where the rights of the individual are being threatened by the advance of totalitarianism, it was never more true that 'eternal vigilance is the price of liberty'.

#### **Facts of history (STEP II: RESEARCH)**

1. People from other lands freely came to the new world to better themselves.
2. The common man in this country has enjoyed a rising standard of living.
3. The constitution provided for the protection of property rights, laying the foundation for subsequent economic as well as political development.
4. Our free society has made it possible for individuals to join together in labor organizations, trade associations, co-operatives and other groups to protect their material welfare.
5. In the twentieth century, the government plays an increasingly important part in promoting the economic welfare of the people.

#### **Experiences and activities (STEP III)**

1. Through CARE or some other agency, send a relief package to someone in Europe.
2. Study a slum area in your region. What weaknesses of our economic system are indicated? How could they be corrected?
3. In your local community find examples of: capitalists, entrepreneur, cooperative, union shop, competition, government regulation of business.
4. In planning for your own future, which of the Four Freedoms seems the most important?
5. Compare the rights of a citizen in this country with a citizen of a country having a different economic system, in regard to the following items:
  - a. Joining labor unions
  - b. Owning property
  - c. Buying and selling
  - d. Going into business for one's self<sup>28</sup>

Other practical uses of American History to promote economic literacy are likely to result as teachers commit themselves to this purpose. Meantime, hope that the problem will claim respectful attention is strengthened by the fact that teachers themselves made the above proposals in complete awareness of average classroom situations, of the widespread consecration to textbook teaching, and of curricular prescriptions that, in fact or fancy, tend to stifle creative teaching.

#### **What of the Future?**

Several needs appear from any intelligent appraisal of the status of American History in relation to education for economic understanding:

1. To determine the worth of materials thus far offered by the Joint Council on Economic Education, experimentation by teachers in many communities will be invaluable.

Group process may be used within school systems to promote further study. Teacher-training institu-

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

tions are in an especially strategic position to refine and improve approaches and procedures. The effort need to be many-pronged if this evaluation proves valid.

2. The development of social action raises a fundamental question: Shall the chronological treatment of American History be discarded in favor of a problem-centered approach? Studies in the psychology of learning suggest an affirmative answer. On the other hand, the prestige of the formal, chronological organization of historical study is so strong that quick or easy progress can hardly be expected. Perhaps the best that can be anticipated in the immediate future is the moderate conversion of conventional courses to occasional, then increasingly prominent, functional emphasis.

Reorientation involves reconsideration of other factors. As the promotion of economic literacy wins support as a primary objective of instruction in American History, teachers will find themselves questioning content and procedure at many points. Has student interest been awakened and cooperation enlisted in the search for economic literacy? Has the vast array of factual material been subjected to critical evaluation? Have problems been defined so as to develop sound perspective on today's issues? Is adequate attention being given to the interrelationship of political, social, cultural, and economic aspects of historical development? Is critical thinking alerted? Is the study of facts for no other purpose than passing tests receiving proper discouragement? Are students evincing growth in responsible behavior? Our democracy has a large stake in the answers to these questions.

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Paul Coons is Coordinator of the Social Studies in Hartford, Connecticut and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Joint Council on Economic Education.

**THE PHILADELPHIA ECONOMIC SEMINAR****C. Leslie Cushman**

During the spring months of 1948 the Philadelphia Public Schools were invited to send one or two representatives to the first of the workshops sponsored by the Joint Council on Economic Education. In searching for these representatives, it was found that there were four persons, all in school positions where they repeatedly were required to act with reference to economic questions, who were willing and eager to attend. The director of the workshop was good enough to double the original offer, and all four Philadelphians went to the workshop.

In the fall of 1948 Philadelphia's four representatives came to the writer to urge that something be done to capitalize upon their summer's experiences. Other conferences followed, with many other persons involved—department heads and teachers of social studies and commerce, the director of business education, the Director of the Joint Council on Economic Education, and others. Out of these there were developed plans for the Philadelphia Economics Seminar.

The Economics Seminar consists of a group of forty-five teachers, department heads, and others selected to represent the nineteen senior and vocational-technical high schools in a study of ways to improve the teaching of economics in Philadelphia.

Since very few pupils enroll in separate courses in economics in Philadelphia, the Seminar is concerned primarily with the improvement of the economic understandings and attitudes developed through instruction in other social studies and in commerce courses. Further, the focus throughout the seminar has been upon the development of economic literacy throughout the pupil personnel, rather than upon the instruction of a few youth destined to specialize in economics. The reason for this may be noted from the follow-

ing paragraphs, quoted from an earlier account of the Seminar.

"Americans are by nature an impetuous people, given to expecting for themselves and their families a great deal from the American economy. This spirit may be a great asset, or it may be a great liability. It is an asset if it is accompanied by reasonable patience and a desire to see how all groups, not just "my group," can get ahead.

"America has been blessed throughout its history by an unusual number of leaders able to rise above class, or party, or personal concern in the promotion of the common welfare. Fortunately such leaders are still found in our own day.

"Our times, for many reasons, demand that this same discipline or quality of character be developed in greater measure among all of us. It is our hope that through the activities of the Economics Seminar there may be developed a spirit, a point of view, and teaching procedures that will enable the Public Schools of Philadelphia to contribute more fully to this type of responsible citizenship throughout the student personnel."

The first type of activity of the Seminar has been related to the self-education of members. The most unique and important feature of this has been a series of general meetings where representatives of business, labor, and government, and professional economists have exchanged ideas with members. The speakers to date and their subjects have been as follows:

#### **Economic Understanding and Effective Citizenship**

Aflred H. Williams, President  
Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia

#### **Interrelation of the Various Parts of Our Economic System**

A. D. H. Kaplan, Senior Economist  
Brookings Institution, Wash., D. C.

**The Business Cycle**

Charles R. Whittlesey

Wharton School, Univ. of Penna.

Wilson Wright, Economist

Armstrong Cork Company

W. B. Woodward, General Chairman

Brotherhood of Locomotive

Firemen and Enginemen

Francis J. Coyle, Vice Pres.

Central Labor Union

H. Charles Ford, Director

United Steel Workers of America, District 7

**The Role of Government in Maintaining High Levels  
of Employment**

Edwin G. Nourse, Chairman

President's Council of Economic Advisers

These meetings have helped greatly to break through the provincialism that too often characterizes school planning. Teachers have developed an understanding of and appreciation for the problems that are faced by leaders in business and industry. They have sensed more fully the scope of the responsibilities of these individuals, and the zeal with which many of them attempt to meet those responsibilities. It has been particularly pleasing to note the concern of business and labor leaders with regard to what is taught in the public schools.

During the course of the present year there will be seven further general meetings of the same nature, each designed to throw light on some one of the special problems which various subcommittees are studying.

The second activity of the Seminar relates to the production of a series of seven resource units on economic issues that seem most in need of re-examination from an educational point of view. These units are to be developed to fit Philadelphia teaching situation. Each unit outline will in-

clude an analysis of the issue considered, an examination of the phases of the issue that can be made most meaningful to high school youth, and suggestions of ways to conduct instruction relative to the issue. The subjects chosen for these unit outlines are as follows:

1. MONEY AND CREDIT
2. TAXATION AND FISCAL POLICY
3. THE ROLE OF SMALL BUSINESS IN THE AMERICAN ECONOMY
4. SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL WELFARE
5. LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS
6. WORLD TRADE AND THE POINT 4 PROGRAM
7. THE ADVANCE OF TECHNOLOGY

A subcommittee of from three to five members is responsible for the work related to each of these topics. Dr. S. P. McCutchen of New York University has been made chiefly responsible for the supervision of this phase of the program.

Seminar members are paid for their extra services through funds contributed chiefly by interested citizens of the city. Mr. Percival E. Foerderer, a trustee of the Committee for Economic Development has been particularly helpful in enlisting the interest and support of local business leaders. The School District has recently also shared in the financial support of the project.

The work of the Seminar during the two-year period of 1948-1950 seems clearly to promise a strong shot in the arm to economics instruction. It appears that the interest in economics will be greatly increased, that the extent to which economic considerations permeate practically every social issue will be more clearly recognized, and that there will be increased concern for the development of economic literacy among all students. No one believes, however, that this will

be sufficient for later years. Permanent and enduring improvement will come to the degree that teachers and department heads are aroused to dig more deeply into economic questions. The technique of conferring relative to such questions with persons active on various economic fronts of American life is one that may well be used extensively for many years to come.

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C. Leslie Cushman is Associate Superintendent of Schools, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

## THE HARTFORD PROGRAM

**Robert H. Mahoney**

Since 1939 Hartford schools have made use of community resources and leaders in developing courses in industrial arts, in business, and in distributive education. At present, several members of the Board of Education staff are cooperating with the education committee of the Hartford Chapter of the National Office Management Association with a view to further improvements in business education in the three senior high schools of the city. Similarly, steps have been taken to bring the banks and the schools into closer relationship. While in the past the banks and schools came together to encourage thrift through a school savings program, at present, thanks to the interest of the education committee of the Connecticut Bankers Association, arrangements have been made to encourage guided bank tours for both teachers and students and to schedule the showing of films that reveal how the bank serves the individual in handling many of his economic problems.

The schools of Hartford have benefited also from the genuine interest manifested by the Hartford Chamber of Commerce in the improvement of public education. Its offi-

ers have given much time to conferences with school personnel and it has made available considerable literature on the economy of Hartford that has proved of value in relating instruction to the community. Particularly useful is the brochure "Economic Description of Hartford, Connecticut," printed in 1948. Within its twenty-four pages there are informative paragraphs under such headings as the following: *Geography and History, Government, Tax Structure, Fiscal Control, City Finances, Public Safety, Health, Manufacturers, Insurance, Banking and Credit, Tobacco, Transportation, Utilities, Labor, Retail Trade, Communications, Housing, Industrial Associations*, and so forth. This booklet presents a splendid over-all view of Hartford's economy. Because of its many specific references to local interests, it serves as an excellent springboard for further exploration and study.

In the light of this background, it has proved easy to develop a more ambitious plan for economic education in the Hartford area. While the Hartford program is still in the exploratory stage, a number of important developments have taken place.

Chief among these has been the appointment of Paul W. Coons to serve as a coordinator to launch the program. Mr. Coons has been both student and staff member of the New York University Workshop and he is a trustee of the Joint Council on Economic Education. Thus he brings to his work keen interest and a thorough background.

To date representative community leaders from business, industry, labor, and agriculture have been identified. They have met frequently with representatives of public school systems in the Greater Hartford Area. The Consultant in Social Studies for the State Department of Education and professors from the University of Connecticut and Teachers College of Connecticut have come to the meetings. The interest of these two institutions is especially appreciated since the inauguration of summer workshops and of exten-

sion courses will depend upon the leadership they are prepared to offer.

In the belief that organization should emerge from functions and activities, there has been some hesitancy to do more than set up the Greater Hartford Interim Committee on Economic Education. It is confidently expected that permanent organization will be achieved some time in 1950. By that time the personnel of the Committee will be more completely representative in character, and a sufficient number of genuinely interested participants will have been enlisted.

One of the first activities of the Interim Committee will be to make a survey of the present status of economic education in Greater Hartford. Thus it will be possible to discover where immediate help is needed and to indicate opportunities for more intensive classroom emphasis. Recommendations on the kind of economic education that will better meet the needs of boys and girls in this locality, will undoubtedly come as a result of the discussions.

Fortunately for this program, it can draw upon many sources for help. Beyond the community, it can look to the State Department of Education which is calling for the redirection and retooling of secondary education. It can look also to the recommendations of the Life Adjustment Education Commission,—in whose conferences a number of Connecticut educators have played a prominent role. Moreover, the formation of many community councils and study groups throughout Connecticut has created an atmosphere favorable to the program now under consideration. Finally, in all of its activities, it can count upon the thoughtful interest and stimulation coming from the Joint Council on Economic Education.

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Robert H. Mahoney is Director of Secondary Education, Hartford Public Schools.

## THE IOWA COUNCIL ON ECONOMIC EDUCATION

**J. E. Stonecipher**

The Iowa Council on Economic Education is a direct out-growth of the 1948 Workshop at New York University. The two Iowans who participated became convinced that modern economic developments had grown beyond the meager background of economic theory that most Iowa citizens, including the teachers of social studies in schools and colleges, could bring into focus for understanding the current problems of our economy. The Workshop had done well its avowed task of arousing its members to the need.

Superintendent N. D. McCombs of Des Moines took the first step by sending an exploratory letter to several colleges, businessmen, schools, and labor organizations in the Des Moines area, inviting those interested to meet with Dr. G. Derwood Baker in October to discuss means of promoting better understanding of economic problems. The response was gratifying and afforded much encouragement to continue further. In January, 1949, a second meeting was arranged, inviting a broad representation of Iowa industry, labor and education to attend. The problem of attacking the job of improving the economic understanding in Iowa was discussed. In characteristic American fashion, it was decided that cooperative effort required an organization which might both fix responsibility for action and place authority for planning and executing the will of the group. A temporary slate of officers and a small executive committee was chosen and empowered to draw up a constitution and take such steps as were necessary to promote the purposes of the organization until a general meeting could be called. Because the members of the temporary executive committee illustrate so clearly the cross sectional nature of the organization, their names and official connections are listed here.

Chairman: Dr. Woody Thompson, Director, Bureau of

Business and Economic Research, State University of Iowa  
Vice Chairman: Howard Hill, President, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation

Treasurer: Austin Finnessy, Director of Public Relations, Iowa State Federation of Labor

Secretary: J. E. Stonecipher, Director of Secondary Education, Des Moines Public Schools

Other committee members:

Vincent Starzinger, Secretary and General Counsel for The Des Moines Register and Tribune Company

Barton Morgan, Professor of Vocational Education and Head of Department, Iowa State College

Scott Pidgeon, President, Bankers Trust Company, Des Moines, Iowa

A constitution was drawn up for submission to members. Because of its brevity and the completeness with which it describes the nature of the Council, the first three sections are reproduced:

## CONSTITUTION

### Iowa Council on Economic Education

I. PREAMBLE. We, the undersigned, do hereby create the Iowa Council on Economic Education in order that better understanding of the principles and the operations of our American economy may be brought to the people of Iowa.

II. PURPOSE. In order to promote the understanding described above we subscribe to the following aims:

(a) The broadest possible dissemination of materials, pamphlets, and other sources of information and use of forums, conferences, clinics, etc., so that the understanding of our economy may be improved in all segments of our population;

(b) The development of cooperative working relationships among professional groups, lay organizations and other agencies in promoting and encouraging the understanding of economic principles;

(c) The encouragement of public schools and other modes of education and communication to make their full con-

tribution to the furtherance of economic and social understanding;

- (d) The promotion, undertaking, encouragement and financing of research, training, and publication in the field of economic education;
- (e) The development of workshops and other effective devices for the training of our teachers and administrators in the secondary school system so that they may better be qualified to carry out the above purposes.

**III. MEMBERSHIP.** Any interested citizen of Iowa may become a member of the Council by application to the secretary and the approval of the executive committee.

No dues, fees, or assessments shall be made of members.

The executive committee was convinced that the sponsorship of a Workshop for the summer of 1950 was the most important initial step that could be taken. By such a project, key persons in all parts of the state could be brought into a full understanding of the purposes of the organization and each become a center for the development of further efforts to improve economic literacy among Iowa citizens. The invitation of the State University of Iowa to use its services and facilities was accepted from among several which were offered. Plans are rapidly shaping for the Workshop. Finances are being secured which will make it possible to invite participants who will be in strategic situations to further the work of the Council. It is expected that seventy-five will be selected, choosing about fifty from secondary school administrators and teachers and teacher training institutions, the remainder to come from adult farm, labor, and business groups, giving special attention to those whose work has definite educational implications.

The Iowa Council on Economic Education is a necessary organizational link which makes possible the cooperation of groups which have had no ready medium for working together. Chambers of Commerce, bankers groups, industrial organizations, farm organizations, labor councils, and federations, public school teachers, teacher training schools, and college level economics departments are among those

brought into action together under this arrangement. No previously existing organization seemed to meet the requirements for enlisting all those who can and should be involved. An interesting approach has been planned. The future may see the Council and its program change in many ways but the need for action is so great that the functions planned for it must be served in some way if our economy is to thrive.

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J. Edgar Stonecipher is Director of Secondary Education, Des Moines Public Schools.

## MINNESOTA WORKSHOP ON ECONOMIC EDUCATION

**Barbara Wright**

During the early summer of 1949, seventy people met together at the University of Minnesota agricultural campus for the first Workshop on Economic Education to be held in this area. One member of the group recently said of the three weeks spent at this workshop, "It was the finest educational experience I have ever had." This is the opinion of most of those who had the privilege of attending.

This workshop was sponsored by the Joint Committee on Economic Education and by the University of Minnesota, with the College of Education and the School of Business at the University sharing the responsibility for promoting and directing it. It was apparent at the start that such a workshop would have to be entirely financed by local sources, since the University of Minnesota had no funds which could be used for this purpose. Mr. J. Cameron Thomson, President of Northwestern Bancorporation, who is intensely interested in the welfare of the Upper Mid-

west, took the leadership in raising from business men in the area the budget necessary to underwrite the project.

Like the Workshop on Economic Education sponsored by New York University at Riverdale Country Day School in 1948, this workshop was operated on a "living in" plan, with all members housed in dormitories. The program was planned to give workshoppers a background of national income economics, followed by presentation of and discussion of current economic problems such as international trade, farm subsidies, currency and marketing problems, and labor-management relations, and cooperatives. Workshoppers met together mornings and evenings to listen to outstanding persons present these issues and then, in true workshop fashion, to discuss their presentation in order to look at all sides of the question. In the afternoon the workshop members worked in committees to translate the information and insights they were getting in the morning and evening lectures into curriculum materials which could be used primarily at the secondary school level. As a result of these activities, ten bulletins were issued. Eight of these are Resource Units (in experimental form) which have been made available to all members of this workshop and to a great many other school people.

An evaluation of the workshop was undertaken by the following methods: each member was asked to fill out a questionnaire during the closing days of the workshop; each working committee was asked to spend part of one of its last sessions in discussion of 4 questions related to evaluation of the workshop and to summarize and report the results; four months after the workshop had closed, each member was invited to send in a short statement giving his reaction to it and telling what use he had made of the experience. A study of these reports indicates many positive values. Among them are the following:

- 1) The presentation of subjects and issues was as objective as it was possible to make it. Several members came

wondering what brand of economics was to be presented, and they were especially wary because "business" was underwriting the costs. They were convinced, however, that both the workshop directors and the lecturers intended to present the facts, to examine all sides, and to leave the workshoppers to come to their own conclusions. Sometimes one point of view or another was over-stressed or under-stressed, and sometimes the workshop directors were unable to find persons in the community to explain or support a point of view. However, the discussion periods and the questions raised after the lectures usually brought the presentation in balance.

2) The opportunity for representatives of business, industry and labor to get acquainted with educators, and for educators to get acquainted with community leaders was judged by all to be extremely valuable. Through the press and by letter, leaders in the community were given the program for the workshop and invited to sit in at sessions in which they were interested. Frequently specific persons were invited to act on panels or to serve as resource persons at particular sessions. Often those who came once were so interested that they came back or sent other members of their firms or organizations. Usually there were eight or ten guests at each session. At the end of the workshop, our guest book showed 240 signatures.

3) The policy of including in the workshop not only teachers from all levels and from many subject fields, but principals, superintendent, and curriculum directors proved sound. The recommendation from the group was that another year we extend the coverage to include teachers in agriculture, in adult education, and more people associated with community activities. It became apparent that in a very real sense, every teacher these days must be, in some degree, a teacher of economic education. Some of the workshoppers came with almost no background in economics; others had a great deal. This made it difficult for the staff.

However, the values that came from people so different meeting together offset the difficulties, and although they did not all come out at the same place, all had made progress.

4) The impact of this workshop is now being felt in the schools in this area. Reports from workshoppers in November, 1949, contain comments such as the following:

"My appreciation of the workshop is constantly increasing as I use the information in my senior economics class...."—"I have been able to do a better job of teaching such subjects as food marketing, consumer buymanship, home planning and budgeting...."—"My broader outlook makes me a better teacher of eighth graders...."—"Workshop widened my economic viewpoints. Find I am able to stress economic facts in my senior social problems classes much better than formerly."—"Our resource files have gone pretty much around \_\_\_\_\_ High, and I have let teachers in other buildings use mine..."—"We are using the curriculum unit, 'Labor-Management Relations' in our American Problems class...."—"Expect to offer a course regarding taxes and our economy during the winter session of night school."—"....My student teacher at present is making use of one of the units, and is studying a couple others."

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Barbara Wright is Senior Consultant in Counselling, Minneapolis Public Schools. She is Vice-President of the Vocational Guidance Association and author of "Handbook of Group Guidance."

## THE MICHIGAN COUNCIL

**Morton S. Malter**

Sixty-five teachers and administrators, representing forty-seven communities in Michigan, participated in an economic education workshop at Michigan State College in

August, 1949. At the conclusion of the workshop, these educators unanimously suggested the formation of a Michigan Council on Economic Education to further economic understanding in the state. They selected a steering committee, headed by Dean Herman J. Wyngarden of Michigan State College, to appoint a board of trustees. At the present writing, selection of the initial membership of the board is almost completed.

The board of trustees and general membership will determine the eventual functions of the Council. However, the following considerations undoubtedly will affect their decisions: a) Suggestions of the workshop participants, b) state needs and interests, and c) projects already underway. On the basis of these considerations, the Council will function as follows:

*Helping to establish workshops in colleges and universities.* Institutions of higher learning are desirable and logical places for initiating state programs for economic education. For example, Michigan State College was able to house all workshop participants in Mason Hall. This permitted a continuous exchange of ideas on economic education by the participants. Many excellent educational and recreational facilities were made available. The departments of education and economics provided the full time services of several staff members. Economists and educators were brought in from many parts of the United States as consultants. Finally, the workshop established a pattern for conducting unbiased economic discussions. This last fact is reflected in the participants' answers to the following question: "In thinking about the total workshop program, do you feel that the emphasis has been slanted in favor of management, labor, or fair to both?" Results: Slanted to management, 4; to labor, 1; fair to both, 55.

Although sixty-five educators attended the Michigan State College workshop, many localities could not be represented. Continuation and extension of the college workshop, eventually to include representatives from all areas in

Michigan, is therefore highly desirable. A number of institutions in the state, including the University of Michigan and Wayne University, could provide the facilities necessary to conduct these workshops.

*Helping to establish community workshops on economic understanding.* Michigan includes many diverse economic interests. It is the home of the automobile industry and United Automobile Workers, C.I.O. In recent months, these two groups have affected the national economy in various ways. The citizens of our state, therefore, must possess adequate economic understandings to play an effective role in our democracy. Workshops on a community level can help to provide these economic understandings.

Participants of the summer workshop have been actively engaged in developing the community workshop idea. They made an auspicious start in this direction when they explained their summer workshop experiences to 125 leaders from their own communities at a dinner in the Michigan State College Student Union. In the past six months, they have spoken frequently to their local Parent-Teacher-Organizations, Kiwanis Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, Farm Bureau, Lion's Club and other civic organizations. Almost all participants have talked about economic education to the teachers and administrators in their school systems.

Several Michigan communities have already established local workshops. The Ferndale Adult Education Department in the fall of 1949 presented a series of six meetings on economic understanding. Patterned after the summer workshop, each session included a speaker, motion picture and group discussion. Niles, Michigan has also organized a workshop on economic education for adults in the city. Flint is conducting a seminar on economic problems with the cooperation of the Mott Foundation and the University of Michigan Extension Division. Approximately forty elementary and secondary teachers are attending the seminar.

*Helping to improve the teaching of economics in the public schools.* As a result of the summer workshop, many

Michigan schools are improving their economic courses. For example, Sturgis and Clare report that the workshop technique has been introduced in their economic classes. Saginaw is using booklets prepared by the Twentieth Century Fund as supplementary material. Ferndale is showing many of the motion pictures viewed at the workshop. Flint is conducting a survey on "Identifying Pupil Problems which Encompass the Total Area of Economic Living." This resource unit was developed at the workshop. These and similar changes are preludes to the introduction of a functional social studies program, based upon pupil and community problems.

The framework for building a functional social studies program fortunately is present in Michigan. Over 100 high schools are parties to the Michigan College Agreement. Under the provisions of this agreement, higher institutions in the state waive conventional course requirements in admitting graduates of the participating high schools. In return, the high schools are required to provide for pupil guidance, make follow-up studies of their graduates, and experiment with their curricula. A participating high school not only can alter the activities within a course, but, more important, it can devote large blocks of time to studying emerging problems.

The Michigan Council can take a leading part in effecting curricula changes and, consequently, improve the teaching of economics. Through support of the college workshops, it can produce educational leaders. Through support of the community workshop, it can educate additional teachers and parents to the need for curricular improvements. It can provide needed classroom materials and consultant services. Finally, the Michigan Council can serve to channel information about interesting educational projects throughout the State.

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Morton S. Malter is Associate Professor of Education, Michigan State College.

